

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 8, 2023

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

I write today to express my support for the Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program (Recompete Pilot Program) and the many high-quality applications for that program from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. For decades, lawmakers have made decisions that prioritized big corporations and outsourcing over American communities, manufacturing, and workers. While some entities have benefited, the economic transitions triggered by these policies have left far too many communities behind. While existing tools like the energy community tax credit have been put in place to support these cities, towns, and rural areas, the CHIPS and Science Act added a new tool to the federal toolbelt: the Recompete Pilot Program.

The Recompete Pilot Program is a targeted, place-based economic development grant program designed to support communities with a high prime-age employment gap, meaning that the share of workers between the ages of 25 and 54 participating in the labor force is significantly lower than the national average. As the Pennsylvania applications attest, the gap can be driven by any number of issues, from lack of transportation to a language barrier to substance-use challenges. Wherever it presents itself, this gap poses a serious barrier to both regional economic growth and sustainable employment for workers who want to participate in the labor force. While other recent programs facilitate the creation of good jobs, Recompete is designed to ensure workers in a given area have the skill sets and wraparound supports they need to achieve stable employment.

The Recompete Pilot Program invites communities to address their respective employment gaps in the ways that make the most sense for their unique challenges. In different places in Pennsylvania, some distinct issues were isolated as employment barriers that Recompete funding could help address. In the Mon Valley, Renovo, and Lancaster, addressing transportation and transit issues for workers was a priority. In Allentown, increasing access to child care was identified as a critical need. Job training to meet the shifting needs of local employers also featured prominently across applications, including applications that served Meadville, Johnstown, Washington, Reading, and Chester. Many places identified multiple barriers, and all are seeking Recompete funds to help address them.

In closing, I ask you provide full and fair consideration to all Pennsylvania applications. The broad demand from Pennsylvania communities for funding through the Recompete Pilot

Program demonstrates how ready our stakeholders are to seize this opportunity and close the gap—for our workers, for our communities, for our state. When we invest in systems that give everyone a fair shot, we build a healthier economy and more vibrant places for Pennsylvanians to live and work.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with the Economic Development Agency, in coordination with Pennsylvania state and local policymakers, to take advantage of the Recompete program to invest in workers, revitalize our communities, and build towards a more prosperous economic future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Casey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator